

THE WORKS

OF

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

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Give me the storm and tempest of thought and action, rather than the dead calm of ignorance and faith. Banish me from Eden when you will; but first let me eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

VOLUME THREE.

LECTURES.

C. P. FARRELL.

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WHICH WAY?

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I.

THERE are two ways,—the natural and the supernatural.

One way is to live for the world we are in, to develop the brain by study and investigation, to take, by invention, advantage of the forces of nature, to the end that we may have good houses, raiment and food, to the end that the hunger of the mind may be fed through art and science.

The other way is to live for another world that we expect, to sacrifice this life that we have for another that we know not of. The other way is by prayer and ceremony to obtain the assistance, the protection of some phantom above the clouds.

One way is to think—to investigate, to observe, and follow the light of reason. The other way is to believe, to accept, to follow, to deny the authority of

WHICH WAY ?

your own senses, your own reason, and bow down to those who are impudent enough to declare that they know.

One way is to live for the benefit of your fellow-men—for your wife and children—to make those you love happy and to shield them from the sorrows of life.

The other way is to live for ghosts, goblins, phantoms and gods with the hope that they will reward you in another world.

One way is to enthrone reason and rely on facts, the other to crown credulity and live on faith.

One way is to walk by the light within—by the flame that illumines the brain, verifying all by the senses—by touch and sight and sound.

The other way is to extinguish the sacred light and follow blindly the steps of another.

One way is to be an honest man, giving to others your thought, standing erect, intrepid, careless of phantoms and hells.

The other way is to cringe and crawl, to betray your nobler self, and to deprive others of the liberty that you have not the courage to enjoy.

Do not imagine that I hate the ones who have taken the wrong side and traveled the wrong road.

WHICH WAY ?

Our fathers did the best they could. They believed in the Supernatural, and they thought that sacrifices and prayer, fasting and weeping, would induce the Supernatural to give them sunshine, rain and harvest—long life in this world and eternal joy in another. To them, God was an absolute monarch, quick to take offence, sudden in anger, terrible in punishment, jealous, hateful to his enemies, generous to his favorites. They believed also in the existence of an evil God, almost the equal of the other God in strength, and a little superior in cunning. Between these two Gods was the soul of man like a mouse between two paws.

Both of these Gods inspired fear. Our fathers did not quite love God, nor quite hate the Devil, but they were afraid of both. They really wished to enjoy themselves with God in the next world and with the Devil in this. They believed that the course of Nature was affected by their conduct; that floods and storms, diseases, earthquakes and tempests were sent as punishments, and that all good phenomena were rewards.

Everything was under the direction and control of supernatural powers. The air, the darkness, were filled with angels and devils; witches and

wizards planned and plotted against the pious—against the true believers. Eclipses were produced by the sins of the people, and the unusual was regarded as the miraculous. In the good old times Christendom was an insane asylum, and insane priests and prelates were the keepers. There was no science. The people did not investigate—did not think. They trembled and believed. Ignorance and superstition ruled the Christian world.

At last a few began to observe, to make records, and to think.

It was found that eclipses came at certain intervals, and that their coming could be foretold. This demonstrated that the actions of men had nothing to do with eclipses. A few began to suspect that earthquakes and storms had natural causes, and happened without the slightest reference to mankind.

Some began to doubt the existence of evil spirits, or the interference of good ones in the affairs of the world. Finding out something about astronomy, the great number of the stars, the certain and continuous motions of the planets, and the fact that many of them were vastly larger than the earth ; ascertaining something about the earth, the slow development of forms, the growth and distribution of plants, the

formation of islands and continents, the parts played by fire, water and air through countless centuries; the kinship of all life; fixing the earth's place in the constellation of the sun; by experiment and research discovering a few secrets of chemistry; by the invention of printing, and the preservation and dissemination of facts, theories and thoughts, they were enabled to break a few chains of superstition, to free themselves a little from the dominion of the supernatural, and to set their faces toward the light. Slowly the number of investigators and thinkers increased, slowly the real facts were gathered, the sciences began to appear, the old beliefs grew a little absurd, the supernatural retreated and ceased to interfere in the ordinary affairs of men.

Schools were founded, children were taught, books were printed and the thinkers increased. Day by day confidence lessened in the supernatural, and day by day men were more and more impressed with the idea that man must be his own protector, his own providence. From the mists and darkness of savagery and superstition emerged the dawn of the Natural. A sense of freedom took possession of the mind, and the soul began to dream of its power. On every side were invention and discovery, and bolder

thought. The church began to regard the friends of science as its foes. Theologians resorted to chain and fagot—to mutilation and torture.

The thinkers were denounced as heretics and Atheists—as the minions of Satan and the defamers of Christ. All the ignorance, prejudice and malice of superstition were aroused and all united for the destruction of investigation and thought. For centuries this conflict was waged. Every outrage was perpetrated, every crime committed by the believers in the supernatural. But, in spite of all, the disciples of the Natural increased, and the power of the church waned. Now the intelligence of the world is on the side of the Natural. Still the conflict goes on—the supernatural constantly losing, and the Natural constantly gaining. In a few years the victory of science over superstition will be complete and universal.

So, there have been for many centuries two philosophies of life ; one in favor of the destruction of the passions—the lessening of wants,—and absolute reliance on some higher power ; the other, in favor of the reasonable gratification of the passions, the increase of wants, and their supply by industry, ingenuity and invention, and the reliance of man on

his own efforts. Diogenes, Epictetus, Socrates to some extent, Buddha and Christ, all taught the first philosophy. All despised riches and luxury, all were the enemies of art and music, the despisers of good clothes and good food and good homes. They were the philosophers of poverty and rags, of huts and hovels, of ignorance and faith. They preached the glories of another world and the miseries of this. They derided the prosperous, the industrious, those who enjoyed life, and reserved heaven for beggars.

This philosophy is losing authority, and now most people are anxious to be happy here in this life. Most people want food and roof and raiment—books and pictures, luxury and leisure. They believe in developing the brain—in making servants and slaves of the forces of Nature.

Now the intelligent men of the world have cast aside the teachings, the philosophy of the ascetics. They no longer believe in the virtue of fasting and self-torture. They believe that happiness is the only good, and that the time to be happy is now—here, in this world. They no longer believe in the rewards and punishments of the supernatural. They believe in consequences, and that the consequences

of bad actions are evil, and the consequences of good actions are good.

They believe that man by investigation, by reason, should find out the conditions of happiness, and then live and act in accordance with such conditions. They do not believe that earthquakes, or tempests, or volcanoes, or eclipses are caused by the conduct of men. They no longer believe in the supernatural. They do not regard themselves as the serfs, servants, or favorites of any celestial king. They feel that many evils can be avoided by knowledge, and for that reason they believe in the development of the brain. The schoolhouse is their church and the university their cathedral.

So, there have been for some centuries two theories of government, — one theological, the other secular.

The king received his power directly from God. It was the business of the people to obey. The priests received their creeds from God and it was the duty of the people to believe.

The theological government is growing somewhat unpopular. In England, Parliament has taken the place of God, and in the United States, government derives its powers from the consent of the governed.

Probably Emperor William is the only man in Germany who really believes that God placed him on the throne and will keep him there whether the German people are satisfied or not. Italy has retired the Catholic God from politics, France belongs to and is governed by the French, and even in Russia there are millions who hold the Czar and all his divine pretensions in contempt.

The theological governments are passing away and the secular are slowly taking their places. Man is growing greater and the Gods are becoming vague and indistinct. These "divine" governments rest on the fear and ignorance of the many, the cunning, the impudence and the mendacity of the few. A secular government is born of the intelligence, the honesty and the courage, not only of the few, but of the many.

We have found that man can govern himself without the assistance of priest or pope, of ghost or God. We have found that religion is not self-evident, and that to believe without evidence is not a praiseworthy action. We know that the self-evident is the square and compass of the brain, the polar star in the firmament of mind. And we know that no one denies the self-evident. We also know that there is no

particular goodness in believing when the evidence is sufficient, and certainly there is none in saying that you believe when the evidence is insufficient.

The believers have not all been good. Some of the worst people in the whole world have been believers. The gentlemen who made Socrates drink hemlock were believers. The Jews who crucified Christ were believers in and worshipers of God. The devil believes in the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and yet it does not seem to have affected his moral character. According to the Bible, he trembles, but he does not reform. At last we have concluded that we have a right to examine the religion of our fathers.

II.

ALL Christians know that all the gods, except Jehovah, were created by man ; that they were, and are, false, foolish and monstrous ; that all the heathen temples were built and all their altars erected in vain ; that the sacrifices were wasted, that the priests were hypocrites, that their prayers were unanswered and that the poor people were deceived, robbed and enslaved. But after all, is our God superior to the gods of the heathen ?

We can ask this question now because we are prosperous, and prosperity gives courage. If we should have a few earthquakes or a pestilence we might fall on our knees, shut our eyes and ask the forgiveness of God for ever having had a thought. We know that famine is the friend of faith and that calamity is the sunshine of superstition. But as we have no pestilence or famine, and as the crust of the earth is reasonably quiet, we can afford to examine into the real character of our God.

It must be admitted that the use of power is an excellent test of character.

Would a good God appeal to prejudice, the armor, fortress, sword and shield of ignorance? to credulity, the ring in the priest-led nose of stupidity? to fear, the capital stock of imposture, the lever of hypocrisy? Would a good God frighten or enlighten his children? Would a good God appeal to reason or ignorance, to justice or selfishness, to liberty or the lash?

To our first parents in the Garden of Eden, our God said nothing about the sacredness of love, nothing about children, nothing about education, about justice or liberty.

After they had violated his command he became ferocious as a wild beast. He cursed the earth and to Eve he said :—" I will greatly multiply thy sorrow. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children. Thy husband shall rule over thee."

Our God made love the slave of pain, made wives serfs, and brutalized the firesides of the world.

Our God drowned the whole world, with the exception of eight people ; made the earth one vast and shoreless sea covered with corpses.

Why did he cover the world with men, women and children knowing that he would destroy them?

Why did he not try to reform them? Why would he create people, knowing that they could not be reformed?

Is it possible that our God was intelligent and good?

After the flood our God selected the Jews and abandoned the rest of his children. He paid no attention to the Hindoos, neglected the Egyptians, ignored the Persians, forgot the Assyrians and failed to remember the Greeks. And yet he was the father of them all. For many centuries he was only a tribal God, protecting the few and despising the many. Our God was ignorant, knew nothing of astronomy or geology. He did not even know the shape of the earth, and thought the stars were only specks.

He knew nothing of disease. He thought that the blood of a bird that had been killed over running water was good medicine. He was revengeful and cruel, and assisted some of his children to butcher and destroy others. He commanded them to murder men, wives and children, and to keep alive the maidens and distribute them among his soldiers.

Our God established slavery — commanded men to buy their fellow-men, to make merchandise of

wives and babes. Our God sanctioned polygamy and made wives the property of their husbands. Our God murdered the people for the crimes of kings.

No man of intelligence, no one whose brain has not been poisoned by superstition, paralyzed by fear, can read the Old Testament without being forced to the conclusion that our God was a wild beast.

If we must have a god, let him be merciful. Let us remember that "the quality of mercy is not strained." Let us remember that when the sword of Justice becomes a staff to support the weak, it bursts into blossom, and that the perfume of that flower is the only incense, the only offering, the only sacrifice that mercy will accept.

III.

SO, there have been two theories about the cause and cure of disease. One is the theological, the other the scientific.

According to the theological idea, diseases were produced by evil spirits, by devils who entered into the bodies of people.

These devils could be cast out by prophets, inspired men and priests.

While Christ was upon earth his principal business was to cast out evil spirits.

For many centuries the priests followed his example, and during the Middle Ages millions of devils were driven from the bodies of men. Diseases were cured with little images of consecrated pewter, with pieces of paper, with crosses worn about the neck—by having plaster of Paris Virgins and clay Christs at the head of the bed, by touching the bones of dead saints, or pieces of the true cross, or one of

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the nails that was driven through the flesh of Christ, or a garment that had been worn by the Virgin Mary, or by sprinkling the breast with holy water, or saying prayers, or counting beads, or making the stations of the cross, or by going without meat, or wearing haircloth, or in some way torturing the body. All diseases were supposed to be of supernatural origin and all cures were of the same nature. Pestilences were stopped by processions, led by priests carrying the Host.

Nothing was known of natural causes and effects. Everything was miraculous and mysterious. The priests were cunning and the people credulous,

Slowly another theory as to the cause and cure of disease took possession of the mind. A few discarded the idea of devils, and took the ground that diseases were naturally produced, and that many of them could be cured by natural means.

At first the physician was exceedingly ignorant, but he knew more than the priest. Slowly but surely he pushed the priest from the bedside. Some people finally became intelligent enough to trust their bodies to the doctors, and remained ignorant enough to leave the care of their souls with the priests. Among civilized people the theological theory has been cast

aside, and the miraculous, the supernatural, no longer has a place in medicine. In Catholic countries the peasants are still cured by images, prayers, holy water and the bones of saints, but when the priests are sick they send for a physician, and now even the Pope, God's agent, gives his sacred body to the care of a doctor.

The scientific has triumphed to a great extent over the theological.

No intelligent person now believes that devils inhabit the bodies of men. No intelligent person now believes that devils are trying to control the actions of men. No intelligent person now believes that devils exist.

And yet, at the present time, in the city of New York, Catholic priests are exhibiting a piece of one of the bones of Saint Anne, the supposed mother of the Virgin Mary. Some of these priests may be credulous imbeciles and some may be pious rogues. If they have any real intelligence they must know that there is no possible way of proving that the piece of bone ever belonged to Saint Anne. And if they have any real intelligence they must know that even the bones of Saint Anne were substantially like the bones of other people, made of substantially

the same material, and that the medical and miraculous qualities of all human bones must be substantially the same. And yet these priests are obtaining from their credulous dupes thousands and thousands of dollars for the privilege of seeing this bone and kissing the box that contains the "sacred relic."

Archbishop Corrigan knows that no one knows who the mother of the Virgin Mary was, that no one knows about any of the bones of this unknown mother, knows that the whole thing is a theological fraud, knows that his priests, or priests under his jurisdiction, are obtaining money under false pretences. Cardinal Gibbons knows the same, but neither of these pious gentlemen has one word to say against this shameless crime. They are willing that priests for the benefit of the church should make merchandise of the hopes and fears of ignorant believers ; willing that fraud that produces revenue should live and thrive.

This is the honesty of the theologian. If these gentlemen should be taken sick they would not touch the relic. They would send for a physician.

Let me tell you a Japanese story that is exactly in point :

An old monk was in charge of a monastery that had been built above the bones of a saint. These bones had the power to cure diseases and they were so placed that by thrusting the arm through an orifice they could be touched by the hand of the pilgrim. Many people, afflicted in many ways, came and touched these bones. Many thought they had been benefited or cured, and many in gratitude left large sums of money with the monk. One day the old monk addressed his assistant as follows: "My dear son, business has fallen off, and I can easily attend to all who come. You will have to find another place. I will give you the white donkey, a little money, and my blessing."

So the young man mounted upon the beast and went his way. In a few days his money was gone and the white donkey died. An idea took possession of the young man's mind. By the side of the road he buried the donkey, and then to every passer-by held out his hands and said in solemn tones: "I pray thee give me a little money to build a temple above the bones of the sinless one."

Such was his success that he built the temple, and then thousands came to touch the bones of the sinless one. The young man became rich, gave em-

ployment to many assistants and lived in the greatest luxury.

One day he made up his mind to visit his old master. Taking with him a large retinue of servants he started for the old home. When he reached the place the old monk was seated by the doorway. With great astonishment he looked at the young man and his retinue. The young man dismounted and made himself known, and the old monk cried : " Where hast thou been ? Tell me, I pray thee, the story of thy success."

" Ah," the young man replied, " old age is stupid, but youth has thoughts. Wait until we are alone and I will tell you all."

So that night the young man told his story, told about the death and burial of the donkey, the begging of money to build a temple over the bones of the sinless one, and of the sums of money he had received for the cures the bones had wrought.

When he finished a satisfied smile crept over his pious face as he added : " Old age is stupid, but youth has thoughts."

" Be not so fast," said the old monk, as he placed his trembling hand on the head of his visitor,

“ Young man, this monastery in which your youth was passed, in which you have seen so many miracles performed, so many diseases cured, was built above the sacred bones of the mother of your little jackass.”

IV.

THERE are two ways of accounting for the sacred books and religions of the world.

One is to say that the sacred books were written by inspired men, and that our religion was revealed to us by God.

The other is to say that all books have been written by men, without any aid from supernatural powers, and that all religions have been naturally produced.

We find that other races and peoples have sacred books and prophets, priests and Christs; we find too that their sacred books were written by men who had the prejudices and peculiarities of the race to which they belonged, and that they contain the mistakes and absurdities peculiar to the people who produced them.

Christians are perfectly satisfied that all the so-called sacred books, with the exception of the Old and New Testaments, were written by men, and

that the claim of inspiration is perfectly absurd. So they believe that all religions, except Judaism and Christianity, were invented by men. The believers in other religions take the ground that their religion was revealed by God, and that all others, including Judaism and Christianity, were made by men. All are right and all are wrong. When they say that "other" religions were produced by men, they are right; when they say that their religion was revealed by God, they are wrong.

Now we know that all tribes and nations have had some kind of religion; that they have believed in the existence of good and evil beings, spirits or powers, that could be softened by gifts or prayer. Now we know that at the foundation of every religion, of all worship, is the pale and bloodless face of fear. Now we know that all religions and all sacred books have been naturally produced — all born of ignorance, fear and cunning.

Now we know that the gifts, sacrifices and prayers were all in vain; that no god received and that no god heard or answered.

A few years ago prayers decided the issue of battle, and priests, through their influence with God, could give the victory. Now no intelligent man

expects any answer to prayer. He knows that nature pursues her course without reference to the wishes of men, that the clouds float, the winds blow, the rain falls and the sun shines without regard to the human race. Yet millions are still praying, still hoping that they can gain the protection of some god, that some being will guard them from accident and disease. Year after year the ministers make the same petitions, pray for the same things, and keep on in spite of the fact that nothing is accomplished.

Whenever good men do some noble thing the clergy give their God the credit, and when evil things are done they hold the men who did the evil responsible, and forget to blame their God.

Praying has become a business, a profession, a trade. A minister is never happier than when praying in public. Most of them are exceedingly familiar with their God. Knowing that he knows everything, they tell him the needs of the nation and the desires of the people, they advise him what to do and when to do it. They appeal to his pride, asking him to do certain things for his own glory. They often pray for the impossible. In the House of Representatives in Washington I once heard a chaplain

pray for what he must have known was impossible. Without a change of countenance, without a smile, with a face solemn as a sepulchre, he said: "I pray thee, O God, to give Congress wisdom." It may be that ministers really think that their prayers do good and it may be that frogs imagine that their croaking brings spring.

The men of thought now know that all religions and all sacred books have been made by men; that no revelation has come from any being superior to nature; that all the prophecies were either false or made after the event; that no miracle ever was or ever will be performed; that no God wants the worship or the assistance of man; that no prayer has ever coaxed one drop of rain from the sky, one ray of light from the sun; that no prayer has stayed the flood, or the tides of the sea, or folded the wings of the storm; that no prayer has given water to the cracked and bleeding lips of thirst, or food to the famishing; that no prayer has stopped the pestilence, stilled the earthquake or quieted the volcano; that no prayer has shielded the innocent, succored the oppressed, unlocked the dungeon's door, broke the chains of slaves, rescued the good and noble from the scaffold, or extinguished the fagot's flame.

The intelligent man now knows that we live in a natural world, that gods and devils and the sons of God are all phantoms, that our religion and our Deity are much like the religion and deities of other nations, and that the stone god of a savage answers prayer and protects his worshipers precisely the same, and to just the same extent, as the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

v.

THERE are two theories about morals. One theory is that the moral man obeys the commands of a supposed God, without stopping to think whether the commands are right or wrong. He believes that the will of the God is the source and fountain of right. He thinks a thing is wrong because the God prohibits it, not that the God prohibits it because it is wrong. This theory calls not for thought, but for obedience. It does not appeal to reason, but to the fear of punishment, the hope of reward. God is a king whose will is law, and men are serfs and slaves.

Many contend that without a belief in the existence of God morality is impossible and that virtue would perish from the earth.

This absurd theory, with its "Thus saith the Lord" has been claimed to be independent of and superior to reason.

The other theory is that right and wrong exist in the nature of things; that certain actions preserve or increase the happiness of man, and that other actions cause sorrow and misery; that all those actions that cause happiness are moral, and that all others are evil, or indifferent. Right and wrong are not revelations from some supposed god, but have been discovered through the experience and intelligence of man. There is nothing miraculous or supernatural about morality. Neither has morality anything to do with another world, or with an infinite being. It applies to conduct here, and the effect of that conduct on ourselves and others determines its nature.

In this world people are obliged to supply their wants by labor. Industry is a necessity, and those who work are the natural enemies of those who steal.

It required no revelation from God to make larceny unpopular. Human beings naturally object to being injured, maimed, or killed, and so everywhere, and at all times, they have tried to protect themselves.

Men did not require a revelation from God to put in their minds the thought of self-preservation. To

defend yourself when attacked is as natural as to eat when you are hungry.

To determine the quality of an action by showing that it is in accordance with, or contrary to the command of some supposed God, is superstition pure and simple. To test all actions by their consequences is scientific and in accord with reason.

According to the supernatural theory, natural consequences are not taken into consideration. Actions are wrong because they have been prohibited and right because they have been commanded. According to the Catholic Church, eating meat on Friday is a sin that deserves eternal punishment. And yet, in the nature of things, the consequences of eating meat on that day must be exactly the same as eating meat on any other. So, all the churches teach that unbelief is a crime, not in the nature of things, but by reason of the will of God.

Of course this is absurd and idiotic. If there be an infinite God he cannot make that wrong which in the nature of things is right. Neither can he make an action good the natural consequences of which are evil. Even an infinite God cannot change a fact. In spite of him the relation between the diameter

and circumference of a circle would remain the same.

All the relations of things to things, of forces to forces, of acts to acts, of causes to effects in the domain of what is called matter, and in the realm of what is called mind, are just as certain, just as unchangeable as the relation between the diameter and circumference of a circle.

An infinite God could not make ingratitude a virtue any easier than he could make a square triangle.

So, the foundations of the moral and the immoral are in the nature of things — in the necessary relation between conduct and well-being, and an infinite God cannot change these foundations, and cannot increase or diminish the natural consequences of actions.

In this world there is neither chance nor caprice, neither magic nor miracle. Behind every event, every thought and dream, is the efficient, the natural and necessary cause.

The effort to make the will of a supposed God the foundation of morality, has filled the world with misery and crime, extinguished in millions of minds the light of reason, and in countless ways hindered and delayed the progress of our race.

Intelligent men now know, that if there be an infinite God, man cannot in any way increase or decrease the happiness of such a being. They know that man can only commit crimes against sentient beings who, to some extent at least, are within his power, and that a crime by a finite being against an infinite being is an infinite impossibility.

VI.

FOR many thousands of years man has believed in and sought for the impossible. In chemistry he has searched for a universal solvent, for some way by which to change the baser metals into gold. Even Lord Bacon was a believer in this absurdity. Thousands of men, during many centuries, in thousands of ways, sought to change the nature of lead and iron so that they might be transformed to gold. They had no conception of the real nature of things. They supposed that they had originally been created by a kind of magic, and could by the same kind of magic be changed into something else. They were all believers in the supernatural. So, in mechanics, men sought for the impossible. They were believers in perpetual motion and they tried to make machines that would through a combination of levers furnish the force that propelled them.

Thousands of ingenious men wasted their lives in the vain effort to produce machines that would in some wonderful way create a force. They did not know that force is eternal, that it can neither be created nor destroyed. They did not know that a machine having perpetual motion would necessarily be a universe within itself, or independent of this, and in which the force called friction would be necessarily changed, without loss, into the force that propelled,—the machine itself causing or creating the original force that put it in motion. And yet in spite of all the absurdities involved, for many centuries men, regarded by their fellows as intelligent and learned, tried to discover the great principle of “perpetual motion.”

Our ancestors studied the stars because in them they thought it possible to learn the fate of nations, the life and destiny of the individual. Eclipses, wandering comets, the relations of certain stars were the forerunners or causes of prosperity or disaster, of the downfall or upbuilding of kingdoms. Astrology was believed to be a science, and those who studied the stars were consulted by warriors, statesmen and kings. The account of the star that led the wise men of the East to the infant Christ was

written by a believer in astrology. It would be hard to overstate the time and talent wasted in the study of this so-called science. The men who believed in astrology thought that they lived in a supernatural world—a world in which causes and effects had no necessary connection with each other—in which all events were the result of magic and necromancy.

Even now, at the close of the nineteenth century, there are hundreds and hundreds of men who make their living by casting the horoscopes of idiots and imbeciles.

The “perpetual motion” of the mechanic, the universal solvent of the chemist, the changing of lead into gold, the foretelling events by the relations of stars were all born of the same ignorance of nature that caused the theologian to imagine an uncaused cause as the cause of all causes and effects.

The theologian insisted that there was something superior to nature, and that that something was the creator and preserver of nature.

Of course there is no more evidence of the existence of that “something” than there is of the philosopher’s stone.

The mechanics who now believe in perpetual motion are insane, so are the chemists who seek to

change one metal into another, so are the honest astrologers, and in a few more years the same can truthfully be said of the honest theologians.

Many of our ancestors believed in the existence of and sought for the Fountain of Perpetual Youth. They believed that an old man could stoop and drink from this fountain and that while he drank his gray hairs would slowly change, that the wrinkles would disappear, that his dim eyes would brighten and grow clear, his heart throb with manhood's force and rhythm, while in his pallid cheeks would burst into blossom the roses of health.

They were believers in the supernatural, the miraculous, and nothing seemed more probable than the impossible.

VII.

MOST people use names in place of arguments. They are satisfied to be disciples, followers of the illustrious dead. Each church, each party has a list of "great men," and they throw the names of these men at each other when discussing their dogmas and creeds.

Men prove the inspiration of the Bible, the divinity of Christ by the admissions of soldiers, statesmen and kings. And in the same way they establish the existence of heaven and hell. Dispute one of their dogmas and you will instantly be told that Isaac Newton or Matthew Hale was on the other side, and you will be asked whether you claim to be superior to Newton or Hale. In our own country the ministers, to establish their absurdities, quote the opinions of Webster and of other successful politicians as though such opinions were demonstrations.

Most Protestants will cheerfully admit that they are inferior in brain and genius to some men who have lived and died in the Catholic faith; that in the matter

of preaching funeral sermons they are not equal to Bossuet ; that their letters are not as interesting and polished as those written by Pascal ; that Torquemada excelled them in the genius of organization, and that for planning a massacre they would not for a moment claim the palm from Catherine de Medici, and yet after these admissions, these same Protestants would insist that the Pope is an unblushing impostor, and the Catholic Church a vampire.

The so-called "great men" of the world have been mistaken in many things. Lord Bacon denied the Copernican system of astronomy and believed to the day of his death that the sun and stars journeyed about this little earth. Matthew Hale was a firm believer in the existence of witches and wizards. John Wesley believed that earthquakes were caused by sin and that they could be prevented by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. John Calvin regarded murder as one of the means to preserve the purity of the gospel. Martin Luther denounced Galileo as a fool because he was opposed to the astronomy of Moses. Webster was in favor of the Fugitive Slave Law and held the book of Job in high esteem. He wanted votes and he knelt to the South. He wanted votes and he flattered the church.

VIII.

VOLUMES might be written on the follies and imbecilities of "great" men.

Only a few years ago the really great men were persecuted, imprisoned or burned. In this way the church was enabled to keep the "great" men on her side.

As a matter of fact it is impossible to tell what the "great" men really thought. We only know what they said. These "great" men had families to support, they had a prejudice against prisons and objected to being burned, and it may be that they thought one way and talked another.

The priests said to these men : "Agree with the creed, talk on our side, or you will be persecuted to the death." Then the priests turned to the people and cried : "Hear what the great men say."

For a few years we have had something like liberty of speech and many men have told their

thoughts. Now the theologians are not quite so apt to appeal to names as formerly. The really great are not on their side. The leaders of modern thought are not Christians. Now the unbelievers can repeat names — names that stand for intellectual triumphs. Humboldt, Helmholtz, Haeckel and Huxley, Darwin, Spencer and Tyndall and many others, stand for investigation, discovery, for vast achievements in the world of thought. These men were and are thinkers and they had and have the courage to express their thoughts. They were not and are not puppets of priests, or the trembling worshippers of ghosts.

For many years, most of the presidents of American colleges have been engaged in the pious work of trying to prevent the intellectual advancement of the race. To such an extent have they succeeded that none of their students have been or are great scientists.

For the purpose of bolstering their creed the orthodox do not now repeat the names of the living, their witnesses are in the cemetery. All the "great" Christians are dead.

To-day we want arguments, not names, reasons, not opinions. It is degrading to blindly follow a

man, or a church. Nothing is nobler than to be governed by reason. To be vanquished by the truth is to be a victor. The man who follows is a slave. The man who thinks is free.

We must remember that most men have been controlled by their surroundings. Most of the intelligent men in Turkey are followers of Mahomet. They were rocked in the cradle of the Koran, they received their religious opinions as they did their features — from their parents. Their opinion on the subject of religion is of no possible value. The same may be said of the Christians of our country. Their belief is the result, not of thought, of investigation, but of surroundings.

All religions have been the result of ignorance, and the seeds were sown and planted in the long night of savagery.

In the decline of the Roman power, in the times when prosperity died, when commerce almost ceased, when the sceptre of authority fell from weak and nerveless hands, when arts were lost and the achievements of the past forgotten or unknown, then Christians came, and holding in contempt all earthly things, told their fellows of another world—of joy eternal beyond the clouds.

If learning had not been lost, if the people had been educated, if they had known the literature of Greece and Rome, if they had been familiar with the tragedies of Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, with the philosophy of Zeno and Epicurus, with the orations of Demosthenes; if they had known the works of art, the miracles of genius, the passions in marble, the dreams in stone; if they had known the history of Rome; if they had understood Lucretius, Cicero and Cæsar; if they had studied the laws, the decisions of the Prætors; if they had known the thoughts of all the mighty dead, there would have been no soil on which the seeds of Christian superstition could have taken root and grown.

But the early Christians hated art, and song, and joy. They slandered and maligned the human race, insisted that the world had been blighted by the curse of God, that this life should be used only in making preparation for the next, that education filled the mind with doubt, and science led the soul from God.

IX.

THERE are two ways. One is to live for God. That has been tried, and the result has always been the same. It was tried in Palestine many years ago and the people who tried it were not protected by their God. They were conquered, overwhelmed and exiled. They lost their country and were scattered over the earth. For many centuries they expected assistance from their God. They believed that they would be gathered together again, that their cities and temples and altars would be rebuilt, that they would again be the favorites of Jehovah, that with his help they would overcome their enemies and rule the world. Century by century the hope has grown weaker and weaker, until now it is regarded by the intelligent as a foolish dream.

Living for God was tried in Switzerland and it ended in slavery and torture. Every avenue that led to improvement, to progress, was closed. Only those in authority were allowed to express their

thoughts. No one tried to increase the happiness of people in this world. Innocent pleasure was regarded as sin, laughter was suppressed, all natural joy despised, and love itself denounced as sin.

They amused themselves with fasting and prayer, hearing sermons, talking about endless pain, committing to memory the genealogies in the Old Testament, and now and then burning one of their fellow-men.

Living for God was tried in Scotland. The people became the serfs and slaves of the blessed Kirk. The ministers became petty tyrants. They poisoned the very springs of life. They interfered with every family, invaded the privacy of every home, sowed the seeds of superstition and fear, and filled the darkness with devils. They claimed to be divinely inspired, that they delivered the messages of God, that to deny their authority was blasphemy, and that all who refused to do their bidding would suffer eternal pain. Under their government Scotland was a land of sighing and sorrow, of grief and pain. The people were slaves.

Living for God was tried in New England. A government was formed in accordance with the Old Testament. The laws, for the most part, were petty

and absurd, the penalties cruel and bloody to the last degree. Religious liberty was regarded as a crime, as an insult to God. Persons differing in belief from those in power, were persecuted, whipped, maimed and exiled. People supposed to be in league with the devil were imprisoned or killed. A theological government was established, ministers were the agents of God, they dictated the laws and fixed the penalties. Everything was under the supervision of the clergy. They had no pity, no mercy. With all their hearts they hated the natural. They promised happiness in another world, and did all they could to destroy the pleasures of this.

Their greatest consolation, their purest joy was found in their belief that all who failed to obey their words, to wear their yoke, would suffer infinite torture in the eternal dungeons of hell.

Living for God was tried in the Dark Ages. Thousands of scaffolds were wet with blood, countless swords were thrust through human hearts. The flames of fagots consumed the flesh of men, dungeons became the homes of those who thought. In the name of God every cruelty was practiced, every crime committed, and liberty perished from the earth. Everywhere the result has been the

same. Living for God has filled the world with blood and flame.

There is another way. Let us live for man, for this world. Let us develop the brain and civilize the heart. Let us ascertain the conditions of happiness and live in accordance with them. Let us do what we can for the destruction of ignorance, poverty and crime. Let us do our best to supply the wants of the body, to satisfy the hunger of the mind, to ascertain the secrets of nature, to the end that we may make the invisible forces the tireless servants of the human race, and fill the world with happy homes.

Let the gods take care of themselves. Let us live for man. Let us remember that those who have sought for the truths of nature have never persecuted their fellow-men. The astronomers and chemists have forged no chains, built no dungeons. The geologists have invented no instrument of torture. The philosophers have not demonstrated the truth of their theories by burning their neighbors. The great infidels, the thinkers, have lived for the good of man.

It is noble to seek for truth, to be intellectually honest, to give to others a true transcript of your mind, a photograph of your thoughts in honest words.

X.

THERE are two ways: The narrow way along which the selfish go in single file, not wide enough for husband and wife to walk side by side while children clasp their hands. The narrow road over the desert of superstition "with here and there a traveler." The narrow grass-grown path, filled with flints and broken glass, bordered by thistles and thorns, where the twice-born limping walk with bleeding feet. If by this path you see a flower, do not pick it. It is a temptation. Beneath its leaves a serpent lies. Keep your eyes on the New Jerusalem. Do not look back for wife or child or friend. Think only of saving your own soul. You will be just as happy in heaven with all you love in hell. Believe, have faith, and you will be rewarded for the goodness of another. Look neither to the right nor left. Keep on, straight on, and you will save your worthless, withered, selfish soul.

This is the narrow road that leads from earth to the Christian's heartless heaven.

There is another way—the broad road.

Give me the wide and ample way, the way broad enough for us all to go together. The broad way where the birds sing, where the sun shines and the streams murmur. The broad way, through the fields where the flowers grow, over the daisied slopes where sunlight, lingering, seems to sleep and dream.

Let us go the broad way with the great world, with science and art, with music and the drama, with all that gladdens, thrills, refines and calms.

Let us go the wide road with husband and wife, with children and friends and with all there is of joy and love between the dawn and dusk of life's strange day.

This world is a great orange tree filled with blossoms, with ripening and ripened fruit, while, underneath the bending boughs, the fallen slowly turn to dust.

Each orange is a life. Let us squeeze it dry, get all the juice there is, so that when death comes we can say: "There is nothing left but withered peel."

Let us travel the broad and natural way. Let us live for man.

To think of what the world has suffered from superstition, from religion, from the worship of beast and stone and god, is almost enough to make one insane. Think of the long, long night of ignorance and fear! Think of the agony, the sufferings of the past, of the days that are dead!

I look. In gloomy caves I see the sacred serpents coiled, waiting for their sacrificial prey. I see their open jaws, their restless tongues, their glittering eyes, their cruel fangs. I see them seize and crush in many horrid folds the helpless children given by fathers and mothers to appease the Serpent-God. I look again. I see temples wrought of stone and gilded with barbaric gold. I see altars red with human blood. I see the solemn priests thrust knives in the white breasts of girls. I look again. I see other temples and other altars, where greedy flames devour the flesh and blood of babes. I see other temples and other priests and other altars dripping with the blood of oxen, lambs and doves.

I look again. I see other temples and other priests and other altars on which are sacrificed the liberties of man. I look. I see the cathedrals of

God, the huts of peasants, the robes of priests and kings, the rags of honest men. I look again. The lovers of God are the murderers of men. I see dungeons filled with the noblest and the best. I see exiles, wanderers, outcasts, millions of martyrs, widows and orphans. I see the cunning instruments of torture and hear the shrieks and sobs and moans of millions dead.

I see the dungeon's gloom, I hear the clank of chains. I see the fagot's flames, the scorched and blackened face, the writhing limbs. I hear the jeers and scoffs of pious fiends. I see the victim on the rack, I hear the tendons as they break. I see a world beneath the feet of priests, liberty in chains, every virtue a crime, every crime a virtue, intelligence despised, stupidity sainted, hypocrisy crowned and the white forehead of honor wearing the brand of shame. This was.

I look again, and in the East of hope's fair sky the first pale light shed by the herald star gives promise of another dawn. I look, and from the ashes, blood and tears the heroes leap to bless the future and avenge the past. I see a world at war, and in the storm and chaos of the deadly strife thrones crumble, altars fall, chains break, creeds change.

The highest peaks are touched with holy light. The dawn has blossomed. I look again. I see discoverers sailing across mysterious seas. I see inventors cunningly enslave the forces of the world. I see the houses being built for schools. Teachers, interpreters of nature, slowly take the place of priests. Philosophers arise, thinkers give the world their wealth of brain, and lips grow rich with words of truth. This is.

I look again, but toward the future now. The popes and priests and kings are gone,—the altars and the thrones have mingled with the dust,—the aristocracy of land and cloud have perished from the earth and air, and all the gods are dead. A new religion sheds its glory on mankind. It is the gospel of this world, the religion of the body, of the heart and brain, the evangel of health and joy. I see a world at peace, where labor reaps its true reward, a world without prisons, without workhouses, without asylums for the insane, a world on which the gibbet's shadow does not fall, a world where the poor girl, trying to win bread with the needle, the needle that has been called "the asp for the breast of the poor," is not driven to the desperate choice of crime or death, of suicide or shame. I see a world without

the beggar's outstretched palm, the miser's heartless, stony stare, the piteous wail of want, the pallid face of crime, the livid lips of lies, the cruel eyes of scorn. I see a race without disease of flesh or brain, shapely and fair, the married harmony of form and use, and as I look life lengthens, fear dies, joy deepens, love intensifies. The world is free. This shall be.